



**Africa RISING East and Southern Africa  
Project Steering Committee Meeting  
8 February 2019  
Lilongwe, Malawi**

[www.africa-rising.net](http://www.africa-rising.net)



**Present**

1. Victor Manyong, Chair - IITA
2. Irmgard Hoeschle-Zeledon, Secretary - IITA
3. Carlo Azzarri, IFPRI
4. Felix Chipjola, Ministry of Agriculture Malawi
5. Adebisi Araba, CIAT
6. Mateete Bekunda, IITA
7. Jonathan Odhong', IITA

**Absent**

1. Brian Isabirye, ASARECA
2. Bakari Msinga, COSTECH

**Agenda**

1. Welcome of PSC members and adoption of agenda
2. Review and approval of minutes from previous meeting
3. Matters arising and follow up on action points from previous meeting
4. Reflection of PSC members on the learning event and field trip
5. Update on Project developments since previous steering committee meeting
6. Implementation issues encountered and discussion
7. PSC membership and performance
8. Any Other Business

The meeting started at 16:00, chaired by Victor Manyong.

Minute	Issue/ discussions	Action taken & responsible person (s)
<b>Agenda 1</b> Welcome of PSC members and adoption of agenda	Manyong welcomed members and thanked them for staying engaged with the project despite having gone more than a year without a steering committee (SC) meeting. Chipojola proposed motion to adopt the agenda and was seconded by Bekunda.	
<b>Agenda 2</b> Review and approval of minutes from previous meeting	Members reviewed minutes of the previous meeting. It was noted that the first name of committee member Araba had not been spelt out in full. A correction was also noted on the spelling of the name of Mrs. Simkanga. Members adopted minutes of the previous meeting.	<b>Secretary</b> to make the corrections in the previous minutes.
<b>Agenda 3</b> Matters arising and follow up on action points from previous meeting.	Bekunda updated members that the project management had taken the decision to merge the Babati, Kongwa, and Kiteto sites into a Tanzania country site. ICRISAT is therefore no longer playing the coordination role for Kongwa and Kiteto partners.	
	For the awareness of members, Manyong informed that ICRISAT is in the process of posting a Director level staff to Tanzania.  Azzarri reported that the paper on minimum data requirements had already been published on CG Space and shared with all project partners.	

	<p>Bekunda reported that the document describing farmer selection criteria for phase 1 was not prepared.</p> <p>Committee members noted that this document was still important (as part of Africa RISING ESA phase 1 legacy) and should still be prioritized. Zeledon informed that she would take over from Bekunda the lead to prepare the document.</p>	<p><b>Zeledon</b> to coordinate preparation of this document together with project staff. Document to be finalized by 15 May 2019, ideally in time for the internally commissioned external review for ESA Project.</p>
	<p>Regarding the ex-ante simulations of Africa RISING technologies, Azzarri reported that the IFPRI team had developed a concept note that was submitted for the ASPIRE challenge (ran by the Big Data Platform). Unfortunately, the concept note was not successful.</p>	<p><b>Azzarri</b> to collaborate on a follow up activity together with Jeroen Groot, Francis Muthoni and Lieven Claessens in 2019. An update to be shared with SC members during the next meeting.</p>
	<p>Zeledon noted that there was little or no improvement in the regularity and documentation of research team meetings.</p> <p>Bekunda added that he felt e-meetings were not effective for the nature of discussions/outputs that project implementers would like to have.</p>	<p>It was agreed that both e-meetings and physical meetings had their pros and cons.</p> <p><b>Bekunda</b> was therefore tasked to develop a regularized schedule that includes both formats. This schedule will be shared with partners well in advance so that they can make plans to participate. All the meetings and their outputs should be documented. Zeledon to look for resources for physical meetings. Bekunda to report on progress at the next SC meeting.</p>
	<p>Regarding SC membership, Manyong noted that Mrs. Simkanga is no longer working at the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and therefore her invite to join the SC was overtaken by events. He proposed that an invitation should be extended to the newly inaugurated Tanzania Agricultural Research Institute (TARI).</p> <p>After some discussion, members were in agreement that TARI should be invited. The decision that no further reminders will be sent to COSTECH about their membership was also upheld.</p>	<p><b>Manyong</b> and <b>Zeledon</b> to draft a letter of invitation to TARI.</p>

	<p>Araba pointed out that there is opportunity for Africa RISING to leverage its scaling efforts through partnering with TAAT. Options to look at could be to map Africa RISING to TAAT or vice versa. So far, USAID has not been expressly involved in TAAT, but project management could probably explore this potential opportunity with USAID contacts.</p> <p>After discussions, members resolved that timing was key if this idea would work. It was agreed that it will be best to approach the TAAT program once its first phase is complete.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda 4</b> Reflection of PSC members on the learning event and field trip.</p>	<p>Araba noted that the sites were great to visit. However, there are certain aspects which were lacking in how the field trips were organized:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too much focus on the scientists and less focus on the farmers. It would have been nicer to have participants interact more in depth with the farmers.</li> <li>• The visit could have also benefited more from the socio-economic scientists and their perspectives than the biophysical scientists only.</li> <li>• It also felt as if some of the farmers/partners were telling us “what we wanted to hear” rather than the actual state of things. For example, on the CA trials.</li> <li>• In general, the structure of the learning event as a whole was well balanced – 2 days in the meeting and 2 in the field was great.</li> <li>• The mix of attendees and the participation was also great.</li> <li>• In general, there was a high propensity for collaboration.</li> </ul> <p>Chipojola noted that in general the meeting was good. He however, noted that it was concerning to learn that a majority of the scientists were still not conversant with the SIA Framework despite the project having shared the document and user guide and held a training. He noticed a missing reading culture among the researchers.</p>	

	<p>Bekunda noted that the observation about minimal farmer engagement in the field trips was correct, but this was not the main target of this particular field visit which was tailored towards the learning event for scientists. He also added that it may have been better to spend more time on one site (and interact more) instead of going to 2 – 3 sites and spending a lot of time on the road.</p> <p>Manyong noted that the project management team shouldn't take it for granted that the event was well organized.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda 5</b> Update on Project developments since previous steering committee meeting</p>	<p>Zeledon gave an update to the SC members detailing the following developments since the previous meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Status of carry over funds and how it was spent during the transition period when funding from USAID dwindled</li> <li>○ Status of Africa RISING satellite project in Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia</li> <li>○ Current Africa RISING funding situation</li> <li>○ Staffing</li> <li>○ Re-organization of the Tanzania project partners</li> <li>○ Updates on PCT decisions on SIA Framework, minimum data sets, Scientific Advisory Group, Communities of Practice, future direction of the program</li> <li>○ Internally commissioned external program review</li> <li>○ New wiki and website</li> </ul> <p>Azzarri noted that the current wiki interface was not very user friendly and a bit difficult to edit, unlike the previous one.</p> <p>In response, Odhong noted that some improvements are still being done to make it more user friendly.</p> <p>Manyong asked Zeledon what mitigation plans were in place if USAID funding for 2019 was delayed beyond March?</p>	<p>SC members thanked <b>Zeledon</b> for a comprehensive report. They however requested that for subsequent meetings, a 1-page report should be sent to all members for information in advance of the SC meeting.</p> <p>Regarding update on the Research Executive Committee, the SC gave the <b>project management</b> a go-ahead to "test" the plan. SC members however suggested that the review of proposals submitted by partners be made blind by selecting reviewers for the proposals from the Africa RISING West Africa project who will be given proposals in which the applicants details have been redacted.</p>

<p><b>Agenda 6</b> Implementation issues encountered and discussion</p>	<p>Bekunda noted that Africa RISING ESA project now has capacity in the core staffing areas. He also updated SC members that the handbook is 70% ready, however there were still some lingering gaps due to partners who haven't submitted their components. On the initiation of partnerships with development partners, he cited 2 nascent collaborations with Islands of Peace and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) which he said were very promising and MoUs have been signed to support the project's scaling aspirations. Bekunda noted two issues of concern : (i) the declining number of students, and (ii) the declining number of publication outputs.</p> <p>Zeledon noted that in her opinion funding wasn't the reason for decline in publications because partners were given funds to complete the loose ends work plan which was primarily focused on completing research and this was aimed at generating publishable quality data.</p>	<p><b>Bekunda</b> to organize a deliverable oriented write shop for the specific scientists who are yet to submit/write up their chapters for the handbooks.</p>
<p><b>Agenda 7</b> PSC membership and performance</p>	<p>Members discussed the following aspects with regards to SC membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CIAT's membership was extended for one year at the previous SC meeting. Is it time now to rotate to another International Research Center (IRC) with Africa RISING ESA project?</li> <li>○ SC members have not consistently responded to management's requests for review of project workplans and reports. What does this mean? Is management asking too much of the committee?</li> <li>○ Is having the SC still necessary in light of changes overtime within the project and the donor needs/requirements?</li> </ul> <p>After discussion, members agreed that an invitation will be extended to ILRI to occupy the rotational IRC representation seat on the SC.</p> <p>Manyong proposed that the terms of the rotational seat for IRC representative within the SC be increased to 2 years, with possibility of 1-year extension.</p>	<p><b>Manyong</b> and <b>Zeledon</b> to draft a letter of invitation to ILRI.</p> <p><b>Zeledon</b> to send reminder for the new Director General of ASARECA requesting for nomination of a new representative to the SC.</p> <p>Regarding the performance of the SC and review of the SC terms of reference, members agreed that this topic is to be revisited after 1 year of the project.</p> <p>The proposal to adjust the term for IRC representation within the SC two 2 years with possibility of 1 year extension was adopted.</p>

	Adding field trips to subsequent field visits is also a good idea that should be strongly considered. IHZ and Manyong to invite ILRI for membership into the steering committee.	
<b>Agenda 8</b> Any Other Business	<p>Araba thanked all SC members and the Africa RISING management for extending invitation for CIAT to represent other IRCs in the SC. He noted that it had been a pleasure serving in this capacity over the past 2 years.</p> <p>On behalf of all SC members, the Chair also expressed gratitude to Araba for his contributions to the Africa RISING program. There being no other business, Manyong declared the meeting close at 20:00.</p>	

Ibadan, 27 February 2019

I. Hoeschle-Zeledon (Secretary) and J. Odhong'

**PSC Africa RISING East and Southern Africa Project**